

Notes from Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review Interdisciplinary NEPA Team Meeting; February 8, 2001; 1:00 PM; Corps of Engineers Conference Room, Albuquerque

In attendance:

Scott Anderholm, USGS

Jim Brainard, Sandia National Lab

Scott Collins, Roy F. Weston

Art Coykendall, USBR

Gina DelloRusso, Bosque del Apache NWR

William DeRagon, Corps

Ellen Dietrich, SAIC

Darrell Eidson, Corps

Richard Fike, Corps

Don Gallegos, Corps

Susan Goodan, SAIC

Rhea Graham, NMISC

Brian Hanson, USFWS

Conrad Keyes, Jr., EWRI of ASCE

Julie Maitland, NMDA

Mike Marcus, SWCA/NMISC

Clay Mathers, Corps

Claudia Oakes, SWCA/NMISC

Robert Padilla, USBR

Harold G. Reid, Pueblo of Zia

Gail Stockton, Corps

Leann Towne, USBR

Mark Yuska, USBR

- ❖ Scott Collins discussed his efforts to integrate the technical team plans of study and to establish the Team Link Web site, which will enable tech teams to share information.
 - The study plans have been entered into a standardized format and posted on the Web site as “Work Packages.” The standardized formats include Gantt charts that will eventually be incorporated into the overall project schedule. Tech team members can edit their documents online.
 - The Team Link site might have levels of password protection established for specific documents, enabling people to update their documents online so it can be shared with other tech team members immediately.
 - The site also has tech team meetings listed, which will be most useful if tech team members post and update their meeting information as soon as it is known. **Tech team meeting arrangements should be posted for the next month by no later than the ID NEPA Team meeting for that month.**
 - Project Managers requested that meeting dates not be changed shortly before the meeting. These dates are also posted on the public Web site, and teams must ensure that members of the public can attend if they wish.
 - Other types of information envisioned for this site include:
 - Message board;
 - Possibly sharing raw data within a tech team;
 - Posting work items that are not team specific; and
 - Links to other useful sites.

- This Web site is not open to the public because its content is pre-decisional. It is intended to be used to further the internal efforts of tech teams and project managers.
- ❖ Leann Towne distributed a handout with examples of scenarios to be used to get to possible alternatives to be described and analyzed in the EIS.
- Leann reminded the group that the Project Managers are still trying to get **representatives from each tech team to attend the URGWOM Integration/Water Operations Technical Team meetings to discuss development of scenarios.**
- There was extensive discussion regarding avoiding confusion of these scenarios with alternatives, as defined under NEPA. This scenario development process will help us gather ideas to formulate alternatives, but we are not there yet.
- The handout included information on possible scenarios for operations of each facility, with varying objectives to be met for each facility.
- The scenarios should avoid making daily operations more difficult, but should also provide the flexibility to meet overall goals. The scenarios should be general in nature and should optimize operations while meeting the main goal of each resource.
 - Objectives will be used to describe the criteria for evaluating the resources of each tech team. Objectives (criteria) will be set by each tech team to optimize or improve their resources.
 - Objectives can vary by reach.
 - The Project Managers want to develop a range of possible scenarios that would attain the best results for each resource, while limiting the proposed scenarios to those that can be implemented within existing authorities. Different types of realistic scenarios must be identified and described by the tech teams.
- **Each tech team should work with the URGWOM Integration/Water Operations Technical Team to develop operations that meet their objectives (criteria).**
 - Time-sensitive options would be important to identify in developing resource-specific scenarios.
- **Leann asked tech team members to review the list in the handout and expand it as needed.**
- Chapter 6 in the tech team notebooks and the fact sheets on water operations will help tech teams to understand what operations can be changed.
- Once scenarios have been identified by each team, some may be combined into multi-objective alternatives that will be go through a preliminary screening process to ascertain viable alternatives to carry forward for in depth analysis
- **By February 21, tech teams should post their team goal for their resource and their objectives (criteria) on the Team Link Web site. The Aquatic Habitat Team handed out an example of their goal and objectives (criteria) for their resource.**
- Eventually, basin-wide goals will be developed, with reach by reach objectives. Resource scenarios will be combined into multi-objective alternatives.
- ❖ Technical Team meeting dates and other issues
 - Riparian and Wetlands Technical Team
 - The next meeting will involve a field trip to San Marcial on March 6.

- The team would like to know how groundwater levels are addressed in URGWOM. Mark Yuska responded that groundwater is calculated as a gradient between the water elevations in the river and the drains. Groundwater levels can be provided as an output from URGWOM. The Riparian Team will contact URGWOM to set up a time to discuss more detailed description of this issue.
- The team has discussed compliance with the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act with the Fish and Wildlife Service. They plan to develop a scope, schedule, and tasks for the length of the Water Operations Review by February 28.
- Water Quality Technical Team
 - The next meeting will be held on February 12, 9:00 a.m., at the FWS Ecological Services office on Osuna. Their regular meeting day is the second Wednesday of the month at 9:00 a.m. at various locations.
- URGWOM Integration/Water Operations Technical Team
 - The regular meeting day is the first Thursday of the month at 1:00 p.m. at the Corps.
- Cultural Resources Technical Team
 - Neal Ackerly of Dos Rios Consultants, Inc., will be the co-team leader with someone from San Juan Pueblo, who has not yet been selected.
 - Ron Kneebone, of the Corps, and Neal attended a meeting of the Middle Rio Grande Pueblos Water Planning Coalition to provide information on the cultural resources team approach for the Water Operations Review.
 - The team leaders will make appointments to meet tribal representatives and schedule follow up meetings to keep them up to date on the Water Operations Review. Once this process has been started, other tech teams can use them to request and coordinate additional data collection.
 - The Riparian and Wetlands Technical Team would like to request lists of special status species from the tribes.
 - Until the team is fully staffed and operating, tech teams can send e-mail requests for information through Ellen Dietrich.
- Land Use, Socioeconomics, and Environmental Justice Technical Team
 - Regular meetings have not been established.
- River Geomorphology, Sedimentation, and Mechanics Technical Team
 - Their regular meeting day is the last Monday of the month. The next meeting will be on February 26 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the Bureau of Reclamation.
 - The activities of this team would mainly support other team goals. They do not anticipate creating their own alternatives, with the possible exception of one to address maintenance of sediment. They may consider maximizing peak flows and maintaining a wider range of flows to achieve a more natural hydrograph.
 - ➡ **Other tech teams should invite this team's members to attend their meetings when they have questions related to geomorphology and sediment.**
- Gina DelloRusso offered to have staff from the National Wildlife Refuge attend a technical team meeting if members have questions about refuge management. Technical team members should call her to request assistance.

- GIS Support Team
 - Regular meeting day is the last Thursday of the month. The next meeting will be on February 22 at 9:00 a.m. at the Corps.
- Aquatic Habitat Technical Team
 - Their regular meeting date is the Tuesday before the ID NEPA Team meetings. Their next meeting will be on March 6 from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon at the Corps.
- ❖ Criteria (goals) discussion followed.
 - Rick Fike distributed a handout that summarizes the criteria to be addressed in a scenario that optimizes aquatic habitat.
 - The Water Quality Tech Team will focus on water quality designations from the state 303 (d) list and indicators within designated reaches.
 - Some of the Riparian and Wetlands Tech Team objectives will be similar to those identified by the Aquatic Habitat team. They must identify minimum and maximum flows that would optimize their resource.
- ❖ Presentations on the Water Operations Review
 - Gail Stockton will make two short presentations at the Middle Rio Grande Water Assembly on March 31, 2001 at UNM's Anthropology Hall. The Water Assembly begins at 8:30 a.m. and will go through 5:00 p.m. Gail's presentations on URGWOM and URGWOPS will be early in the afternoon.
 - The Project Managers asked that any requests for presentations be forwarded to them.



- ❖ **The next ID NEPA Team meeting will be held on March 8 at 1:00 p.m. at the Corps.**